

**TESTIMONY BEFORE THE
SENATE COMMITTEE ON RULES AND ADMINISTRATION
FEBRUARY 8, 2006
BY
THE HONORABLE AL SWIFT**

I am Al Swift, a former Member of the House of Representatives from Washington State who served in the House for eight terms, retiring in 1995. For two sessions I headed the Democratic effort in the House to reform Campaign Finance – unsuccessfully, I ruefully add. I am now a principal in the lobbying firm of Colling Murphy Swift Hynes.

It is worth noting at the outset that the people who have recently plead guilty did so for violations of current law. They were caught under rules and legislation that already exist.

However, one must go on the assumption that Congress will adopt some additional lobby reforms.

We personally believe that the vast majority of lawmakers are willing to abide by whatever rules there are, as are most lobbyists. But the public has less confidence of that than we do and, thus, Congress needs to respond to that more skeptical perception.

When Congress has reacted to similar scandals in the past, it has generally crafted rules that are complex, often difficult to understand if you are law abiding, and easy to circumvent if you aren't.

So, this time, why not adopt solid, simple, effective reforms instead of the usual patchwork of well-intended but often meaningless changes?

In addition to simplicity we propose a guiding principle: Members of Congress and their staffs are here for one purpose only – to conduct the public's business. So what is useful for that "business" is what the rules should be about.

For example, the theater, sports events, golf outings and such all have no essential relationship to the public business. Nor do gifts. The first suggestion, then, is to just ban all gifts and entertainment — period. Fooling around with dollar amounts just makes a game out of it. And who needs a \$49 gift anyway?. So, do the simple thing: get rid of both gifts and entertainment.

Travel is different. Travel that is connected to public business can be very useful. It has also been abused. But we believe there is a way to keep even privately funded travel available to Members and staff while reducing the chance for abuse. Require that all privately sponsored travel be authorized by the Committee with jurisdiction over the "business" that is to be done. Committees would be responsible for determining the relevance, value and validity of any travel paid for by outside sources. Of course, committees would be required to file full disclosure of the trip promptly. Members would be required to report their and their staff's trips on their websites.

There are additional suggestions and I would refer you to the testimony of my colleague Bob Hynes.

**THE HONORABLE AL SWIFT
COLLING MURPHY SWIFT HYNES**

BIOGRAPHY

Al Swift served sixteen years in Congress representing the state of Washington's second Congressional district. His highly respected leadership qualities enabled him to be one of a select few Members who wielded two gavels simultaneously. A member of the House Energy & Commerce Committee, he chaired the subcommittee with jurisdiction over Superfund, Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA), railroads, the Federal Trade Commission (FTC), and the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB). Swift gained a reputation as a moderate, hard-working pro-business Democrat that was a deal-maker and had a knack for retaining substantive knowledge and legislating on point. He became the de facto chairman of a caucus of moderates who broke a long deadlock between environmentalists and pro-industry factions on the Clear Air Act.

Throughout his career, Swift took on many difficult issues, often those without political glamour, and developed effective bipartisan coalitions to move them forward. Collaborating with Rep. Tom Tauke of Iowa, he co-authored landmark telecommunications legislation. Swift also led the motor-voter registration and campaign finance reform in the House. He is the author of numerous laws in fields as varied as energy, transportation, and election reporting.

Before being elected to Congress, Swift was a broadcaster in his home state of Washington, where he was Director of News and Public Affairs for KVOS-TV and the winner of a regional Emmy for excellence. He was Washington's beloved evening anchorman for eleven years, but as the Congressional Quarterly noted, "it is hard to imagine anyone doing more than Swift to dispel the stereotype of the local TV anchorman as a prisoner of style over substance."

After serving in Congress, Swift served as Vice President of Government Affairs for Burlington Northern Railroad. He worked diligently to re-establish Amtrak service between Seattle and Vancouver, British Columbia. He reorganized their political action committee and placed the department on the political map.

Swift continues his involvement in these many areas of expertise and regularly authors the political commentary column "A Swift 2¢ Worth." With a background in broadcast journalism and decades of experience in Congress, he has an uncanny mastery at packaging and delivering a complete message to Congress.